

NIETZSCHE IN FICTION.

"A New Humanity; or, the Easter Island" is the ponderous English title of a translation of Adolf Wilbrandt's novel, "Die Oster-Insel," which the Lippincotts have just published. The translation is sufficiently clear to carry the meaning of the German writer to the English reader, and for that much we must be thankful. It is certainly not a work of literary art, but that does not matter.

Interest in this novel, which was written in 1894, chiefly centres in the fact that the central personage is avowedly the counterpart of the unfortunate German idol smasher, Friedrich Nietzsche. It has been a trick of Wilbrandt, in his novels, (he has been journalist, poet, biographer, dramatist, and theatre director as well as novelist,) to build romances around the lives of some of his famous contemporaries. In "A New Humanity" Nietzsche appears as Helmut Adler, an enthusiast, possessed of a scheme for the improvement of the human race. Nietzsche's aim, before his mind was impaired, seemed to be to improve (or to shock and startle) the human race merely by an astonishing if harmonious and artistic arrangement of inexpensive words. Wilbrandt makes his protagonist in some sort a man of action, or at least a dreamer with plans, intent not only on sighing for but actually on developing the superman. His idea is to go with a few well-selected followers to a far Eastern isle, strongly fortified and surrounded by mines connected with electric batteries, so as to keep away the unregenerate man, and there work for the rearing of a perfect race of a uniform type.

However, Adler as a man of action is a failure. He loses his reason and dies, so that he, too, might as well have passed his life in dreaming and writing. The portrait of the philosopher has been harshly condemned in Germany by those who believe in the beneficence of Nietzsche's philosophy. On the other hand, it suits those who think Nietzsche's influence was pernicious. Probably Nietzsche and his philosophy had their place in the great scheme of life. They set people to thinking, and that rarely does any harm. Nietzsche was a force while he lasted. The opinion of President Patton of Princeton Theological University, expressed in his sermon to the students last Sunday, that he still endures and that the philosophy of Nietzsche will be potent enough to lower the moral standard of the whole civilized world, may lend interest to this portrayal of the author of "Thus Spake Zarathustra" by one of his contemporaries.

The outcome of Wilbrandt's book is rather conventional. The dead Adler's daughter and her sweetheart decide that the island of perfection is to be found only in our own souls and that we must look there also for the superman who is to conquer the "ape-man" of these material days.

The New York Times

Published: June 10, 1905

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